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COMMENCEMENT, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
DECEMBER 22, 1950
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Commencement is an important milestone and should be a happy time for the graduates. It has traditionally been seized upon by one of us "oldsters" to expound the bright and glorious opportunities of the future, especially to tell the graduates just how to use their futures.

I hesitate to follow that pattern for two reasons. In the first place, the mistakes of my generation have been phenomenal. Any advice which we can give must be well seasoned with both embarrassment and humility.

In the second place, I don't think that the future is rosy. I am extremely pessimistic about the immediate future, although I hope that I am completely wrong about it all. But, in my opinion, these years ahead, perhaps ten, will be the most hazardous years in our history.

In our immediate past, many people, and I am one of them, have been apprehensive over some of our domestic problems. Let me merely refer to some of them, for they are still with us and must be met, in addition to the present emergency.

There is, for instance, the threat of inflation. We hear talk of

inflation and of how this or that will bring inflation. We have inflation now. It is a matter of degree. Just what degree will bring disaster? We tempt it daily. It is your problem and my problem, individually. For instance, just who among us are willing not to have our wages raised and thus put a little block in the way of inflation?

Then, there is the so-called welfare state. It has become well-nigh a political issue in this country, especially in Ohio. No reasonable person finds fault with the basic ideas of the welfare state. But who shall be the beneficiaries of the program? Just how far can the program be extended before the economy is threatened and the structure collapse of its own weight? You know, there was a school of thought—and probably still is—which argued that thirty dollars every Thursday would save us. Of course, it would need to be sixty dollars now. We want a state in which the welfare of the needy is assured, but we don't want it to become a mirage in which able people think they can get something for nothing. It can't be done.

I mention these problems as merely typical problems which have been and still are on our doorstep.

But these problems, and others not mentioned, pressing as they are, fade into relative insignificance when placed alongside the most difficult

and hazardous problem of them all. That is the Russian problem. Any hope which some people may have had that Russia was intent upon peace must have been dispelled by the events of recent weeks. Even some of the most vocal Russian apologists have subsided. Technically, I suppose that we are not at war with Russia but, be reminded, shooting is only one phase of a war. The basic strategy in modern warfare is to destroy the enemy's potential to wage war. If Russia, by one method or another, can break our economy, the principal battle will have been won, even before the big shooting war begins.

This, the Russian problem is our most serious and terrifying problem, but those other problems are ~~are~~ inseparable. They must ~~all~~ be solved, for the failure to solve one of them makes it more difficult to solve the others. If we fail to solve these problems, or any one of them, we shall lose our freedom—our political freedom, our economic freedom, our religious freedom—all our freedoms, for freedom is indivisible and will be preserved intact or lost completely.

As a graduate of this university, you must come to grips with these problems. In fact, this university and its counterparts throughout the nation were founded to give people the power and the ability to solve such problems. You've apparently passed the "blue books" and successfully wrestled

with the other examinations which this university has prescribed, but your big test is yet to come.

I should like to say something about your preparation for this test. You can get some idea of your ability to pass this big test by a bit of self examination. This self-examination, incidentally, applies not only to you but it should apply to all of us. I urge you to examine yourself with respect to four pressing needs of our day.

The first need is that you provide and support intelligent leadership. We need leaders who can come up with the right answers. Mistakes which were once only costly may today be fatal. This intelligent leadership is needed in all fields: government, science, business, labor, and education. Right now, it is desperately needed to deal with the war crisis. Keep in mind that if we fail at this point we shall fail at all points.

Your responsibility is clear. The degree you receive from this great university marks you. To you much has been given and from you much is expected. If trained citizens fail us, we can turn to no other adequate reservoir for leadership.

I do not wish to imply that Ohio State University can make leaders of

all its students, but if many leaders do not emerge from such groups, the taxpayers are entitled to a refund. Even at this advanced period of our literacy, your college degree marks you as exceptional.

When one considers the statistics showing the large number of students who do not graduate from high school, and the large number of high school graduates who do not enter college, and the large number of college students who do not complete the requirements for a degree, it necessarily follows that a college education is still the treasured asset of the few.

And it is to the few that society has always looked for leadership, especially in time of great need. In unforgettable words, Mr. Churchill paid tribute to the Royal Air Force by saying that "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." That has generally been true in great movements and at critical moments. There was no congestion at Valley Forge. Our Constitution was signed by only 39 men, scarcely enough to provide a two-platoon football squad for Ohio State. In 1777, there were 200,000 men of military age in the 13 states, yet Washington had only 4,000 regulars. It was the minority which gave us majority rule.

Although freedom can be preserved only if millions rise to its defense, these millions must be sparked by a few. All the leaders will certainly not be college graduates, but if there is not a generous proportion of college graduates among them, they will fail their colleges, the nation, and mankind.

My second appeal is for individual responsibility. There is no substitute for personal responsibility. We must not continue the trend in which personal responsibility is abdicating in favor of big government. We persist in this trend in spite of the warning signs posted throughout the world. We disregard the warnings of history, for paternalism always begets despotism. Whenever centralized government increases, freedom goes down. Why should we think that we alone can escape that law of cause and effect?

"Consent of the governed" gives way to consent of the government. In his attempt to find an easy way to security, the citizen often seems willing to sacrifice his most precious asset, liberty. It was Benjamin Franklin who said, "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

I am not talking about sound social, economic and military measures in which the government acts as the common agent and the people willingly pay the

freight. I have reference to the growing habit of trying to get something for nothing. If all members of pressure groups--and all of us are members of pressure groups of one kind or another--if all of us would accept personal responsibility, and work as hard on our own account as we work to get the government to take over our responsibilities and work for us, we would more nearly achieve security and need less help from the government. Why do so many of us think that we can get something for nothing? Why do so many of us think that we are entitled to some special handicap? Why don't we pay our way? I wonder what our grandchildren will think of us when they read of the high production, the high level of employment, the high standard of living we enjoy, and the fact that with all this, we haven't been paying our way? They may not believe that the national debt should make up so large a part of their national heritage. My second appeal is for greater acceptance of individual, personal responsibility on your part and on the part of all our citizens.

My third appeal is for integrity. By integrity I mean nothing fancy--just plain honesty and uprightness, a soundness of moral principle and character. Neither does it require any fancy explanation or elaboration.

Candidates for public office exhibit no integrity when they make campaign promises which they have no intention of fulfilling and which they know they cannot keep.

Advertisers are not honest when they use semantic tricks to promote a sale.

No man has a right to break the law just because he can get away with it. Too many act as if error consists in being caught instead of doing wrong.

We need national integrity, but our national integrity can never exceed the sum of our individual integrity. Each of us needs to be alert, informed, vigilant, and honest. Let's not be afraid to be honest, even if honesty is unpopular.

My fourth appeal is for loyalty, an earnest and ardent loyalty to our country. Four score and seven years ago last month, Abraham Lincoln made that memorable address at Gettysburg, in which he asked for an increased devotion to the principles of liberty and equality. With our future as uncertain and hazardous as it now seems, we must with increased fervor "highly resolve" that that form of government which has done most for the dignity and welfare of man shall not perish from the earth.

There is no longer any question about Russia's feeling toward us.

The Russian government, in every deed and plan, has marked us for destruction.

Their system does not give the individual a choice or a chance. We do not

accept that, so we must go. We've become a great industrial nation because of

our system of free enterprise. Communism hates the free enterprise system,

therefore it has resolved to crush it. So, it has the same philosophy toward

free institutions that it has toward free individuals.

Man's three great objectives on this earth are peace, freedom, and a

better life for all. Communism is completely opposed to all three, because

they are inimical to Communism. Russia talks peace and makes war. Russia talks

freedom while it enslaves. As for providing a better way of life for all, anyone

who thinks that exists in Russia or its satellites, should be given free transport

and Godspeed. Communism means death to liberty, to individual initiative and even

death to man's soul, for it is the avowed foe of free religion. We like to think

that we are in the era of the common man. All the evidence there is points to

the fact that the common man has no chance under Communism.

This century has brought great responsibilities to our nation. We did

not seek them but we cannot avoid them. We have virtually become the guardians

of the idea of liberty throughout the world. Actually, it seems to me, we hold

the only hope this world has for freedom. Only completely loyal citizens can bear that torch.

Some of you will enter my profession, the teaching profession. I congratulate you, for education is our most important business. In that work you can make an extraordinary contribution to our country. Your influence in promoting a sound patriotism and a strong citizenry can be such as to defy evaluation. To have even a small part in creating that pattern is to have a large part in shaping the future.

When your children graduate from this or some other university, I hope that the future will appear brighter and that more cheerful things may be said to them. In these days, however, we need to be realistic about the problems we face. Improvement will not come about automatically. We can work our way to security only if we meet the challenges before us with intelligent leadership, individual responsibility, integrity, and loyalty. And you who are university graduates, presumably trained for a greater share of this total responsibility, must not fail us.

You and your children have a rendezvous with the future. It must be a rendezvous with freedom. The day may be long in coming but if you and

your kind do your work well, this generation of American people will yet be
able to say with the poet: "I saw the powers of darkness put to flight;

I saw the morning break."